

Open

When we woke up this morning and got ourselves ready for the day and had our breakfast – for those that do – related to those in our home, or others around us, and walked, biked, bussed, or drove in our cars here, what was it that was foremost on our hearts and our minds as we did so? Did we or do we approach the day, with foremost on our hearts and minds that we are followers of Jesus and that we are people of the kingdom of God? Do we understand that as followers of Christ, wherever we go and whatever do, and whatever we say, is at every point about the kingdom of God?

We are ambassadors for Christ. We are the hands and the feet of the good news of Christ. We are the compassion and the grace of Christ. In everything and at every point we are influencers for and of the Kingdom of God.

Any disciples that were in or around the room 'that day' *understood this*. They'd left their careers, families, and ways of life and staked everything on Jesus being who he said he was.

We might look at what's happening around us and think, yip ambassadors, hands and feet, compassion, etc., I get all that, but I don't see a lot changing by all the effort we're putting in. We might see the world as a lost cause, and ask, what difference are we making? What is God doing?

Listen carefully, that's all important. We are to be rolling up our sleeves and work for the Lord, in his kingdom; making an effort in his mission for us. However, make no mistake, God is at work. God is moving, and working, and building. That's what we'll see today, *that Gods kingdom is unstoppable*. And, despite our efforts, big or small, Jesus will build his church. God will build and establish his kingdom, now, and into eternity. And he will do this in ways that are *visible*, but also *invisible*...and he can do this through and with you and I... if, when, we join him...

(READ) ¹⁸ ... "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches." ²⁰ Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? ²¹ It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."

ITS GODS KINGDOM

We can see that Jesus is wanting to make very clear to a room full of people what the kingdom of God *is like*, so they can see *the unstoppable nature of Gods kingdom*. And Jesus has given 2 illustrations of what he says *it's like*. Like a mustard seed, that's planted, then becomes a tree in which birds perch. And it's like yeast, mixed, thoroughly, through dough.

Both illustrations basically make the same point, that the kingdom starts out small, and seemingly insignificant, but will, because its Gods kingdom, have unstoppable influence and eventually cover the whole earth.

The mustard tree indicates the kingdom is visible (you see it, it's apparent)

The yeast mixed through the dough indicates the kingdom is invisible (you don't see it, but do see the effects of it reaching all parts of the 'dough'¹).

In both cases you see evidence of the influence that God is building his kingdom.

Every parable as you'll recall from our earlier teaching in Luke has one central meaning (truth). I want to suggest to you, that central meaning is (highlighted it already) **Gods kingdom is Unstoppable.**

God is at work, God will be at work, nothing will stop the seed growing, nor the yeast working through the dough. Having established that, the question becomes am I, or are we (as beneficiaries of the seed and yeast) on board with what God is doing, are we working with him, for him, in step with him, aligned with him as he builds *his kingdom*?

What is the kingdom of God? Important we understand that before we can appreciate what Jesus is saying in our passage today.

There are 'kingdoms' on earth where monarchs have absolute rule. 6 in fact of the 43 sovereign states in the world that have a monarch as head of state. Formerly Queen Elizabeth and now King Charles III is the monarch of fifteen Commonwealth realms, made up of 54 member states. These are important people; that God has placed in those positions (Dan. 2; Rom. 13). However, Gods kingdom is incomparable to any other kingdom that has a king and or a queen and monarchies.

Psalm 47 ² *For the LORD Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth... (v.9) for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.*

Rev. 19:16 *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Kings on earth rule over realms. But when Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, he speaks of a place (and space...) where God reigns absolutely - He reigns absolutely over all the universe (Ps. 103:19 *The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*). He speaks of someone who reigns sovereign over and above any other kingdom.

Not only that, the kingdom of God is a spiritual reign over the hearts and lives of those who have committed their lives to following Jesus, as their King. Conversely, those who do not follow Jesus as King are not in his kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9).

Then there's the final phase (if you like) of his reign, when Jesus comes a second time and establishes the new heavens and a new earth. Summarised for you as follows:

He reigns as King over the universe

He reigns as King in the lives who follow Christ

He reigns as King in eternity

¹ It's hidden then pervasive

GOD BUILDS HIS KINGDOM

And so his message to those gathered in that room was there's something happening here, I'm the king of this kingdom, and this is what "it" looks like. Seed is being planted, *it will become* a tree, yeast is being placed and *will work* its way through the dough, and you must choose to be a part of it.

But we need to back up just wee bit...the astute ones among us will have noticed I missed the words (start of v. 18) "*then Jesus asked...*"

AMP: *So this led Him to say...* ESV: *He said therefore...*

...meaning there must be a connection of some kind with what Jesus has just done in the synagogue, toward the woman. Remember *he saw her, met her need, and showed her compassion.* "*then Jesus asked...this led Him to say... What is the kingdom of God like?*"

So what is that connection?

It is that what they saw and experienced with Jesus there, is only the beginning. While the religious leaders were humiliated, but others were standing there amazed at all the wonderful things he was doing (see Luke 13:17) ...some probably with their jaws wide open going, wow, Jesus is saying: "you ain't seen nothing yet!" This is what the kingdom of God is like.

This, what's just happened – and bear in mind he called out the least likely, but most needy person in the room, and Jesus healed her, saved her, loved her – this, is the essence of the work of the kingdom, and it is like the seed that grows, and multiplies, and yeast that works through the dough, that have within them the inherent power of God, and it's unstoppable. And Jesus is saying, "It's starting here...with you!"²

Its Gods kingdom, he will build it and it *will be brought* to a glorious conclusion even though it began small and insignificant and faced the opposition that it did, and faces the opposition that it does...

On this point my mind goes back a few weeks to SCAAW and the Sunday where Geoff Tremaine mentioned wherever the Church is being persecuted, it is also growing. In China today there are an estimated 100 million Christians, meaning a hundredfold increase since 1949. The church in China suffering severe persecution, but *Gods kingdom is being built.* In the last 14 years, more Muslims have become Christians than in the last 14 centuries³.

I read a brief biography on the life of Amy Carmichael the other day, the Irish missionary, who at age 25, set sail for the East, giving her life to sharing Jesus in Japan, China, Ceylon, and finally India, where she spent the final 55 years of her life.

² Do be aware the focus is not on the growth of the tree, it is on the power in the seed meaning the power of God that brings the growth.

³ Geoff Tremaine, FBC, 4/12/22; When Jesus was born, an estimated 170 million to 200 million people populated our planet. This Christmas, for the first time in history, the world's population surpasses 8 billion people. Here's a breakdown from the Joshua Project:

There she became known as "Amma," or "mother," as she founded the Dohnavur Fellowship, a refuge for underprivileged children.

Amy's life of obedience and courage stands as a model for all who claim the name of Christ. She was a woman with desires and dreams, faults and fears, who gave her life unconditionally to serve Jesus. By the time of Amma's death in 1951, the Dohnavur family included nearly 900 souls.

Today, most of the buildings at Dohnavur are no longer in use, with only about 20 girls living in the residence. However, the community of the Dohnavur Fellowship continues to express great affection and gratitude for their Amma. Amy Carmichael's true legacy, is the people whose lives were changed forever through trust in Jesus. She, was the hands and feet of God, but it was him, God, who was building his kingdom.⁴

He is building his church, he is building his kingdom and it is unstoppable despite any and all attempts by Satan or whoever and whenever to stop or slow it down

Matt. 16:15-18 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

And do note here: he will build his what? Church. Gods kingdom is not a worldly empire, a business, a social club, or a building, but people. People who have been impacted by the kingdom which is like, the mustard seed and like the yeast in dough. People, in whose lives the gates of hell have not overcome.

3 amazing illustrations of this from scripture:

- Acts 16:14 *One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.*
- Paul is then confronted by a slave girl in Acts 16:18 prophesying, declaring things, and making lots of money for her owners, *Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.*
- And then Paul and Silas are in prison for the good things they've been doing and what does God do? Overcomes the gates of hell and rips open the prison doors, and then...
- (Acts 16:29-31) *The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."*
- ...one bent over woman healed, gates of hell overcome as Jesus builds his church.

We don't build anything. *It is Gods kingdom and he will build it.* He will build it his way. That's the message of these parables.

⁴ Review: 'A Chance to Die' by Elisabeth Elliot (thegospelcoalition.org)

And they demonstrate the mustard seed doesn't grow from a seed to a tree that birds perch in overnight. Yeast takes time to be worked through the dough and then for the yeast to take effect. Meaning Gods kingdom will be built at his pace. We have no power to control it, slow it or speed it. We cannot go slower than God or faster than God, leaving the only choice, to be *in step* with God

This is the great mystery or grace of God. Though God will do the decisive building, he uses us as his hands and feet, as we're faithful to him in obedience, in service, in his mission for us, and the preaching of the truth Gods word, to build his church.

Isn't that an exciting prospect? To be part of something unstoppable, that started like a mustard seed and a teaspoon of yeast? Do you know we're connected to the followers of Jesus that were there that day, and heard what Jesus was saying...? We spiritually whakapapa back to this time? And B.T.W unlike Ian Foster who needs to select the very best players for the position in the ABS, who does Jesus select, to carry his message forward, to pick up from where he left off? The best candidates, the brightest and best looking students. No, an ordinary bunch of motley men...fishermen, and tax collectors!

And after that, Pentecost where "the way"⁵ literally exploded – (Acts 2:41) *Those who accepted his (Peters) message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day...(v. 47) And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

At the time Jesus was born, there was between 170-200m believers. This Christmas, for the first time in history, the world's population surpasses 8 billion people⁶. 2.2-2.5 Billion Christians in the world today⁷. Begun as a mustard seed and yeast... and you and I are the branches, the beneficiaries of this movement...that started with one person! No other thing or religion that has been started by one person compares to this

One person! This one person Jesus, came as baby, born in humble surroundings in a stinky manger, lived, and died a brutal death for the forgiveness of the sins of those who might believe in him, rose again and sent his Holy Spirit to fill and empower believers, so that we could do then do what we want? No, filled to do what he wills! And he is now, soon, coming again.

Today we're reminded by the humblest of seeds that it is Gods kingdom, he will build it and to take the message of the seed of the good news of Jesus to anyone yet to know him...

(video - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/short-film-how-the-humble-mustard-seed-reminds-us-of-gods-global-unstoppable-kingdom/>)

⁵ Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22

⁶ 4 Ways to 'Be Still and Know' This Christmas (thegospelcoalition.org)

⁷ how many christians worldwide - Search (bing.com)

...this is us here, now, this year... the living branches of God's kingdom. Commissioned to go and sow the seed of the gospel, in Fairfield, in Hamilton. Why has God placed you/us here? To see the power of the kingdom brought to this community as Jesus demonstrated with the bent over woman... *"Ours should be the love that asks not 'How little' but 'How much'; the love that pours out its all and revels in the joy of having something to pour on the feet of its beloved (God's Missionary p. 34)."*⁸

The mustard seed and the yeast show us that the kingdom of God has the power to grow and to enlarge into something we have no ability to predict or comprehend: Jesus shows us that the growth capacity of the things of God is enormous.⁹ The mustard seed and yeast show us that no ministry, no mission, no genuine attempt to reach people, when fully surrendered to God is inconsequential. And when we are, surrendered, God works in us and through us what can appear to be inconsequential. But it's not or never.

It's so easy to feel like we're not doing the right thing, or good enough, it's easy to feel that overwhelming sense of powerlessness particularly when we see the state of the world. We might see the world as a lost cause, asking, what difference are we really making, what is God doing? Perhaps the problem is we're doing it in our own effort *and it's not fully surrendered to God?*

In many ways, *what is God doing* is a futile question. Jesus' parables answer that. Despite our efforts, big or small, Jesus will build his church, God will build and establish his kingdom, now, and into eternity. And we have the exciting opportunity to be on board with what God is doing... we need new mustard trees; we need new Christian missions.

No longer can we sit and wait for God to do something before we realise he's already done everything, before we realise he's at work, and we're to join him. Whatever disciples were in the room that day Jesus healed the woman, and saw the transforming power of God firsthand, I imagine – though they're the minority in the room – Jesus eyeballing them as he speaks these parables, saying to them: *You take this transforming power of God – that starts here, as a seed, as yeast.* 2000 years later, message is the same.

Isa. 9:6, 7 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

This is how we approach the day; this is what must foremost on our hearts as we join him in his unstoppable kingdom.

⁸ [Who was Amy Carmichael? | GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

⁹ R. C. Sproul, 282.